



# JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

*James L. Clifford, Editor—John H. Middendorf, Ass't Editor*

*610 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University,*

*New York 27, N. Y.*

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In order to speed up the mechanical production of the News Letter we are trying this time a new process, and hope that you will not find the copy any more difficult to read. Let us know if you do.

Many readers have written that they failed to receive the September 1951 number (XI, 4). Please check your files and let us hear from you if you lack this issue.

Now that your editor is back in the United States it is hoped that the *JNL* will gradually get back in its stride. We still are on sabbatical leave, but can be reached at the above address.

## Dr. Johnson and the English Law

In 1948 Sir Arnold D. McNair brought out a pleasant but not very thorough study of Johnson and the law. Now with Ned McAdam's (N.Y.U.) complete and scholarly analysis (Syracuse Univ. Press) we are able to see the breadth and importance of Johnson's legal interests. He was, as McAdam suggests, the "great lawyer-layman of his century."

In this book McAdam studies carefully all the evidence — in Boswell's *Life*, in Johnson's well-known works, in the *Dictionary*, and particularly in the Vinerian lectures on the common law by Sir Robert Chambers. The discovery, a few years ago, that Johnson had collaborated with Chambers in composing the fifty-six Oxford lectures delivered between 1767 and 1774 was one of McAdam's outstanding accomplishments. Now, for the first time, these lectures have been carefully culled for Johnsonian contributions.

What interests us most is McAdam's shrewd analysis of the development of Johnson's respect for tradition, the origin of which he

finds more in the law than in religion. Johnson began as a violent anti-Hanoverian — witness the pointed satires of 1738 and early 1739 — but the turning point came very early, McAdam thinks, with the "Considerations" on the legality of abridgment which were drawn up in the summer of 1739 for the guidance of Cave. From this time on, Johnson became more and more willing to accept the established order, though allowing himself the pleasure of repeated flings at the Whigs. After consideration of all the evidence, McAdam finds the legend that Johnson was involved in the 1745 Jacobite rebellion unthinkable. From what we learn of his maturing legal preoccupation, the theory that Johnson joined the Pretender simply will not hold.

We wish there were more space in which to discuss other parts of McAdam's study. But one thing should be made clear: *Dr. Johnson and the English Law* is of utmost importance for all those who are interested in Johnson's thought.

### Boswell Notes

The latest word is that *Boswell in Holland*, the next volume in the McGraw-Hill series, will be published on April 28th. Arrangements have now been concluded for a Finnish translation of the *London Journal*.

There have recently appeared two abridged editions of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* — one translated into German by Fritz Güttinger and published in Zurich; the other translated into Norwegian by Solveig Tunold, and published in Oslo by H. Aschehoug & Co. Both are admirably illustrated, and are certainly much more attractive in format than comparable American editions.

Between 2 and 3 on the afternoon of Saturday, February 29, there was an interesting re-broadcast from station WNYC of a B.B.C. dramatization of "The Boswell Story." The original presentation was some months ago in England. Most of the parts were taken by professional actors, but Lady Talbot de Malahide personally told her part of the story. We thought the entire broadcast excellent and wish recordings might somehow be made available for sale. It was highly entertaining to listen to the supposed Irish accent of Malone, and to the speech of the actors taking the parts of C. B. Tinker, Fred Pottle, and Ralph Isham.

Joseph Wood Krutch's fictional "The Last Boswell Paper," which appeared in the *SRL* last July, has been privately printed in a little pamphlet by Philip and Fanny Duschnes in New York.

Nicholas Joost (Loyola, Chicago) sends in a Danish review of the *London Journal* from the *Politikens Ugeblad*, which was brought in by one of his students. We will gladly pass it on to anyone who easily reads Danish.

### Nell Gwyn: Royal Mistress

Not often does a book appear which can draw excited cheers both from the general reader and the sober specialist. John Harold Wilson's new life of Nell Gwyn (Pellegrini and Cudahy) is such a book. Witty, entertaining, scrupulously accurate and thorough (so far as we can tell), it is a delightful volume. Indeed, it may almost be taken as a model of how to adapt the fruits of exhaustive research to make a popular best seller (If it isn't yet a best seller, it ought to be!).

There is little need here to say more about the contents of the biography — about Nell and the complexity of Charles II's amatory adventures. But we might add that the speed with which the various ladies and sluts passed through his bed leaves one with something of the happy bewilderment of an old Marx Brothers comedy.

### Pope Studies

Now that we have seen a copy of Bill Wimsatt's admirable volume of selections from Pope (Rinehart), we wish to point out again its usefulness as a text for college courses. The long critical Introduction should appeal to enquiring mid-twentieth-century students. The price is attractive. And the selection from Pope's works is excellent. Some may wonder at the amount included from the *Peri Bathous*, but personally we applaud the choice. Moreover, we welcome *Guardian* No. 40, concerned with the pastorals. The one major omission which we lament is the Preface to Shakespeare. All in all, this is one of the best of the Rinehart inexpensive editions.



For seven years of his life Pope labored steadily on his translation of the *Iliad*. Now in Douglas Knight's *Pope and the Heroic Tradition* (Yale U. P.) we get the first full scale critical study of this work as literature. In the *JNL*, unfortunately, there is no space for any extended analysis of Knight's work; all that we can do is to indicate the nature of the contents. Basically, Knight is concerned with showing how Pope's English poem embodied the significant qualities of the great tradition of heroic poetry, as well as the broader tradition of English poetry. For all those interested in Augustan theory and practice in poetry this will prove a valuable and suggestive study.

*Alexander Pope: Catholic Poet* by Father Francis Beauchesne Thornton (Pellegrini and Cudahy) is frankly a partisan biography, intended to stress the poet's religious orthodoxy and to explain many of his actions as a result of his constant danger of persecution as a Roman Catholic. Smoothly written in a pleasant style, it tries to defend Pope against all attacks. Obviously the Whigs come off badly, and Addison is treated most unsympathetically. To fit his pattern, Father Thornton blithely shrugs off many of the controversial points, or ignores them completely. Indeed he merely refers to the "way in which the accusations of immorality, envy, spite, and dishonesty disappear when exposed to the pitiless light of truth."

In the lengthy analysis of the orthodoxy of the *Essay on Man* (evidently completed before the appearance of Maynard Mack's fine edition), Father Thornton minimizes the influence of Bolingbroke and stresses that of Cudworth, King, Pascal, and Fénelon. But there is too much flogging of Elwin and Courthope over Pope's reputed deism. After all, who worries about Elwin any more?

We hasten to add that there is much in this book to applaud — for example, the whole-hearted defense of the *Dunciad* and the insistence on the light gayety of Pope's disposition. But the book could never be called an objective, scholarly appraisal.

As we have noted previously, the Yale University Press is now the American publisher for the Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope. In a recent announcement notice is given that the edition will finally include ten volumes (the Homer is to be

added). The first three volumes, now out of print, are in the process of being revised for a new edition.

W. L. MacDonald's *Pope and His Critics* is being issued in this country by the University of Washington Press.

To be mentioned also is Leon Howard, "The American Revolt against Pope" in *SP* for January 1952.

### New Projects

A. D. McKillop (Rice) plans to bring out an edition of the letters of James Thomson. Let him know if you run across any Thomson manuscripts.

Geoffrey Beard (80 High Street, Wollaston, Stourbridge, Worcestershire), together with a colleague, is embarking on a biography of William Henry Lyttelton, the close friend of Henry Thrale. He is now going through all the Lyttelton papers at Hagley Park, and will welcome any information about his subject which may be found elsewhere.

Samuel N. Bogorad (Univ. of Vermont) writes: "I wonder if you could spare a line or two in the next *JNL* to announce that I am now doing research on *The Jane Shore Story* — a study of the uses of the Jane Shore theme in English literature." He is particularly interested in references in Restoration and 18th-century works to novels, plays, poems, ballads, etc.

John C. Stephens, Jr. (Emory) is preparing a new edition of Steele's *Guardian* (1713).

David V. Erdman (Univ. of Minn.) writes: "I am eager to learn of any out-of-the-way references to the painter James Barry, the friend of Blake; in particular anything that sheds light on his sympathies with Wilkes, Fox, and America. For example the editor of his *Works* (I, 327) describes his drawing, 'The Conversion of Polemon, dedicated to Mr. Fox' (1778) as a defence of Fox against 'some sarcastic remarks made... by either Price or Priestley in a club to which Barry belonged.' Can anyone identify the club in question?

"I would give my eye teeth for information leading to the discovery of a picture Barry is said to have engraved in 1776: 'The Rise of America, with the decline of Europe.' An allegorical design he etched at the heat of the American War. (328).



"Incidentally, in Wm. Whitley's *Artists and Their Friends*, II, 17, Barry's portrait of Johnson is declared, by an unnamed correspondent of John Landseer, to represent Johnson as he really was and to make all other portraits look sottish, blinking or imbecile. What is the opinion of modern Johnsonians?"

### Recent Books

Important in the history of ideas, A. D. McKillop's *The Background of Thomson's "Liberty"* has been issued as a Rice Institute Pamphlet (Vol. 38, No. 2, July 1951). *Liberty* is not much read today, and we suspect that it never will be, but with McKillop's valuable analysis we can now, at least, understand its significance in the changing patterns of thought of the day. A listing of the chapter headings will give some idea of what McKillop has done: The Setting for the Grand Tour, The View of Italy, Ancient History, The Fine Arts, Northern Liberty, Political Intentions.

At another time we hope to comment more fully on R. L. Brett's *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury* (Hutchinson), a work of the first order.

While there has been no opportunity to examine them thoroughly, we would like to mention briefly the two recent volumes in the Yale Walpole Edition: Vol. 15 - Walpole's Correspondence with Sir David Dalrymple, Conyers Middleton, Lord Buchan, Daniel and Samuel Lysons, William Robertson, Robert Henry, William Roscoe, William Beloe, Robert Nares, and James Edwards; Vol. 16 - Walpole's Correspondence with Michael Lort, Thomas Chatterton, John Pinkerton, Sir John Fenn, William Bewley, Henry Zouch, and Nathaniel Hillier. The editors of these two volumes of letters written to various historians and antiquaries are W. S. Lewis, C. H. Bennett, A. G. Hoover, A. D. Wallace, and R. M. Williams. While it may be trite to say that the usual high standards of editing are here maintained, what else can one say, since it is true? With such a superbly edited edition, one runs out of adjectives.

Mark Van Doren's *The Selected Letters of William Cowper*, in the Farrar, Straus and Young "Great Letters Series" under the general editorship of Louis Kronenberger is an attractive volume. Van Doren's Introduction is sympathetic and understanding; and the selection of letters is made with the avowed intention of

showing all sides of Cowper's character. We can think of no better book to introduce the shy recluse to new generations of readers.

Many thanks to R. W. Ketton-Cremer for his interesting *Country Neighborhood* (Faber and Faber), which is based on letters written by the Rev. Patrick St. Clair of Sustead in Norfolk to his patron Ashe Windham of Fellbrig in the 1730s.

Although Anna Bird Stewart's *Enter David Garrick* (Lippincott), illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard, is chiefly designed for young people, we might add that we know she has been very anxious to make it as authentic as possible. She has visited Lichfield and other places connected with Garrick in her search for information.

Samuel Shellabarger's *Lord Chesterfield and His World*, issued some years ago in England, has now been published in this country by Little Brown.

Dick Altick writes: "I don't think the *JNL* has yet noted the appearance, this year, of an extremely useful bibliography which certainly all eighteenth-century scholars will welcome. It's Stanley Pargellis and D. J. Medley, *Bibliography of British History: The Eighteenth Century, 1714-1789* (Oxford). The volume — in the same series as Conyers Read's on the Tudor period and Godfrey Davies' on the Stuart, though much fuller — is a most convenient tool for research and study."

Vol VI, "Political Tracts 1711-1713," of the Blackwell edition of the Prose Writings of Jonathan Swift has now appeared.

Other books which may be here mentioned are: the Reynard Library *Selected Works of Goldsmith*, chosen by Richard Garnett (Rupert Hart-Davis); William Freeman, *The Incredible De Foe* (Herbert Jenkins); Lucy Poate Stebbins, *London Ladies: True Tales of the 18th Century* (Columbia U. P.); Arthur J. Adams, *History of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths from Early Times until the Year 1785* (Sylvan Press); Andrew Browning, *Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby and Duke of Leeds, 1632-1712* (Glasgow: Jackson); Percy Colson, *White's* (Heinemann); Philip Gosse, *Dr. Viper: the Querulous Life of Philip Thicknesse*; *The Sofa* by Crebillon fils, translated by Bonamy Dobrée (Folio Society); *A Critical Bibliography of French Literature, Vol. IV: the Eighteenth Century*, edited by George R. Havens and Donald F. Bond (Syracuse).

By the time this appears, Paul F. Kirby's *The Grand Tour of Italy: 1750-1850* (Vanni) should be available. More of it next time.



## A Query

Robert Rogers (317 Library, Univ. of Ill.) writes that his biographical study of Alexander Pope's later career is well advanced. He is trying to locate copies of the following five pamphlets relating to Pope's quarrels:

- (1) *The True Peri Bathous: or, The Art of Sinking in Poetry, and Rising Again. In Four Cantos.*
- (2) *A Petition to Pope from Several Noblemen.*
- (3) John Cowper (?), *Of Good Nature, an Epistle humbly Inscrib'd to his Grace, the D--e of C--nd-s. Occaston'd by Mr. P-----'s Impudent Satire.*
- (4) *Malice Defeated. A Pastoral Essay. Occastoned by Mr. Pope's Character of Lord Timon in his Epistle to the Earl of Burlington.*
- (5) *A Letter to a Noble Lord, on the Conduct of Mr. Pope, in first Deforming a Great Man, and next in Abusing the Town for their Resentment of the Libel.*

Can any one give him a hint as to where any of these works may be found?

## Johnson and "Excise"

When Johnson's *Dictionary* first appeared in 1755 his definition of "excise" caused much irritation to those in charge of the department of Custom and Excise. The Board actually consulted the Attorney General about a possible prosecution for libel. To this the Attorney General replied: "I am of opinion that it is a libel: but under all circumstances, I should think it better to give him an opportunity of altering his definition; and in case he doesn't threaten him with an Information" (dated November 29, 1755). But Johnson refused to be frightened, and the same definition appeared in the later editions.

At the Library of the Custom and Excise in London, now in Finsbury Square, you may find exhibited the copy of the first edition of the *Dictionary* which so irked the Board, and also of the third edition of 1765, possibly purchased to check up on Johnson's reaction to the Attorney General's threat. During the blitz in 1940, when the Custom House was largely destroyed, this copy of the third edition was injured by a splinter of an enemy bomb, which embedded itself in the volume. Part of the definition of "excise" was left still readable, but the reference to the collection of the tax by



"wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid" was completely obliterated. So Hitler was able to do something that the 18th-century Commissioners were never able to do.

### Johnsoniana

In our last we commented on, though we had not seen, an interesting reference to Johnson, which Donald Greene (Saskatchewan) had sent in. Now we can give the complete reference. The anecdote may be found in an article by E. P. Scarlett, in *The New Trail*, Univ. of Alberta, Spring 1951, pp. 29-30; and the original account appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* for Feb. 1798.

R. W. Chapman has sent on a technical article, which not many of you will have seen, by S. Krishnamurti, "Frequency-Distribution of Nouns in Dr. Johnson's Prose Works" in the *Journal of the University of Bombay* for September 1951.

Another essay, which may not have come your way, is Edward Emley, "Dr. Johnson and Modern Criticism" in the *West Virginia University Bulletin* (Philological Papers) for October 1951. In the same number is a short paper, Edward J. Van Liere, "Dr. Johnson and the Weather."

In J. W. H. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries* (Methuen) there is much about Johnson, and one long chapter is entitled "The Great Cham of literature: Johnson." The critical point of view is traditional and unexciting.

Two out-of-the-way essays on Johnson, which we stumbled upon recently, are: Sir Reader William Bullard, *Samuel Johnson: a Public Lecture* (with a Persian translation by L. Suratgar), published by the British Council at Teheran in 1943. (This is a reprint of a lecture given at the University of Teheran by the British Ambassador); and S. Elliott Napier, "Doctor Johnson: a Literary Anomaly" in *The Australian National Review* for December 1, 1937.

Other recent articles concerned with Johnson are: Donald Cornu, "The Historical Authenticity of Dr. Johnson's 'Speaking Cat'," in *RES* for October 1951; James Gray, "Beattie and the Johnson Circle" in *Queen's Quarterly* for Winter 1951-52; Edwin Honig, "Crusoe, Rascals, and the Suit of Clothes" in *Univ. of Kansas City Review* for Winter 1951; Robert Donald Spector, "Dr. Johnson's Swallows" in *N&Q* for December 22, 1951; A. D. Atkinson, "Dr. Johnson and Some Physico-Theological Themes" in *N&Q* for January 5, 1952; Arthur Sherbo, "George III, Franklin, and Dr. Johnson" in *N&Q* for January 19.

There is an interesting discussion of Johnson's attitude toward allegory in Edward A. Bloom, "The Allegorical Principle" in *ELH* for September 1951.

### Miscellaneous News Items

N. Lester (1939 Vyse Ave., New York 60, N.Y.), who so kindly compiled the index to the *JNL*, writes that because of space difficulties connected with a city apartment, he would like to sell a part of his Johnsonian library of modern books. He is preparing a list of titles and prices which he will gladly send to anyone interested. Just drop him a card.

We are always pleased to see copies of our sister publications -- the *Seventeenth Century News*, and *The Periodical Post Boy*. Long may they continue to flourish!

The British Museum has issued (1951) a new pamphlet entitled *The Catalogues of the Manuscript Collections*. It has been prepared by T. C. Skeat, Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts, and is priced at 1/6. Obviously it will be of more use to scholars working in the British Museum, but it might also be advantageously studied by those in this country who are planning to work in this library.

Henry Pettit brings to our attention an article by Alex C. Burr, "Gibbon: Chemistry and Chemists" in the *Journal of Chemical Education* (1938), 537-38. Pettit adds: "Mr. Burr writes very pleasantly of Gibbon's occupation with chemistry during a break in his work on *The Decline and Fall* while he prepared himself to deal with the first evidences of chemical warfare in the siege of Constantinople."

We wonder if you know that Sheila Radice's *Not All Sleep*, published by Arnold in 1938, has to do with Hammond of the *Elegies*.

### A Few Recent Articles

Concerned with Defoe are: Andrew M. Wilkinson, "The 'Meditations' of Daniel Defoe" in *MLR* for July, Oct., 1951; Edwin Honig, "Crusoe, Rasselas, and the Suit of Clothes" in *Univ. of Kansas City Review* for Winter 1951. Having to do with the first half of the century are: Kathleen M. Williams, "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" in *ELH* for December 1951; D. A. Fineman, "The Motivation of Pope's 'Guardian' 40" in *MLN* for January 1952; A. D. McKillop, "Peter the Great in Thomson's 'Winter'" in *MLN* for January; Arthur Sherbo, "Warburton and the 1745 Shakespeare" in *JEGP* for January; John B.



Shipley, "Fielding and 'The Plain Truth' (1740)" in *N&Q* for December 22, 1951; John F. Speer, "The Identity of 'Ralph Freeman'" in *MLN* for February; R. D. Havens, "Unusual Opinions in 1725 and 1726" in *PQ* for October 1951.

Concerned with later topics are: Oscar Sherwin, "Milton for the Masses: John Wesley's Edition of 'Paradise Lost'" in *MLQ* for September 1951; George L. Phillips, "Sweeps' Costumes and Disguises" in *N&Q* for November 24, 1951; Robert M. Schmitz, "In Defense of David Hume" in *Studies in Memory of Frank Martindale Webster*, Washington Univ. Studies (1951); G. A. Bonnard, "Samuel Richardson and Guillaume Antoine de Luc" in *MLR* for July, October 1951; T. C. Duncan-Eaves, "Graphic Illustration of the Novels of Samuel Richardson, 1740-1810" in *Huntington Library Quart.* for August 1951; Arthur L. Cooke, "Some Side Lights on the Theory of Gothic Romance" in *MLQ* for December 1951; Gertrude E. Noyes, "The Beginnings of the Study of Synonyms in England" in *PMLA* for December, 1951; Cecil Price, "David Garrick and Evan Lloyd" in *RES* for January, 1952.

### A Johnson Anecdote

In *The Weekly Entertainer* for October 16, 1786, there appears a "Letter from a Lady, containing some Anecdotes of the Late Dr. Johnson, written Just after His Death." The writer of the letter was from Lichfield and obviously knew Lucy Porter. Can any of you provide further identification? The story is as follows:

"Walking one morning over some fields near Lichfield, he met a lad about fifteen, whose appearance spoke the extreme of poverty and wretchedness -- he asked charity of Dr. Johnson, who enquired why he could not work -- his reply was, that he could get none -- oh, if that's all, (said the Dr.) follow me -- and taking him home with him, ordered the servants to buy him necessaries; and give him (added he) one of my coats, which if too long, cut it shorter, and send him in to wait at dinner; which was accordingly done, and, considering his strange appearance, he was tolerably handy. -- But the next morning the new servant eloped with his new clothes and a few other articles he thought proper to make free with. -- What a pity that mankind should ever find cause to repent their benevolence."

## A Johnson Anecdote

Donald Greene (Saskatchewan) sends in the following:

"In A. A. Luce's fine biography *The Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (London, Nelson, 1849), there is an anecdote of Johnson that doesn't seem to have made its way into the Johnson literature:

In 1752 he [George Berkeley, second son of the Bishop] entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he proved himself a young man of expensive tastes, who kept horses and entertained. He met Dr. Johnson at Oxford, so his widow records; Dr. Johnson made fun of the Bermuda project, and George made his excuses and walked out of the room; and subsequently refused Johnson's repeated requests for permission to write a Life of the Bishop. A member of the party remonstrated with Dr. Johnson, who replied, "Why, I think the Bishop's scheme no bad one; but I abused it to take down the young gentleman, lest he should be too vain of having had such a father."  
(p. 183)

Luce's source is the preface to *Poems by the late George Monck Berkeley, Esq., LL.B., F.S.S.A.* (London, 1797), pp. ccl-ccliii. The book is rare; Luce used the copy at Canterbury Cathedral, where the George of the anecdote was a Canon. It was edited by Mrs. Eliza Berkeley, widow of George junior and mother of George Monck, who also wrote the 630-page preface, which must set some kind of record for length of prefaces. The poems themselves occupied only 178 pages."

Greene concludes with the suggestion that perhaps Mrs. Berkeley's long-winded Preface might well be searched by 18th-century scholars for other anecdotes.